NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

March 22, 2010

The Third Session of the Forty-Sixth General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

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Delivered at the Opening of
The Third Session of the Forty-Sixth
General Assembly of the
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador
on Monday, March 22, 2010

by His Honour
The Honourable John C. Crosbie, PC, OC, ONL, QC
Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

Remembering Cougar Flight 491

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Newfoundland and Labrador is a seafaring province with a long, proud history of reliance on ocean industries. The mighty North Atlantic Ocean that has sustained Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for centuries has also broken our hearts more times than we can count. Last year on the 12th of March, in the dreadful crash of Cougar Flight 491, the North Atlantic claimed seventeen precious lives: Thomas Anwyll, Peter Breen, Gary Corbett, Captain Matthew Davis, Wade Drake, Wade Duggan, Corey Eddy, Keith Escott, Colin Henley, First Officer Timothy Lanouette, Ken MacRae, Allison Maher, Gregory Morris, Derrick Mullowney, Burch Nash, John Pelley and Paul Pike. Only one individual, Robert Decker, was pulled to safety from the icy waters. Last April, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board appointed the Honourable Robert Wells to serve as Commissioner of the Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are confident – particularly in light of Commissioner Wells' early recommendations – that he will take a thorough and comprehensive approach to safety in the offshore. My Government will form a committee that includes representatives of the families to identify an appropriate action to memorialize their loved ones.

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Reporting Progress

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Newfoundland and Labrador has come a very long way since My Government was first elected to office in 2003. Beginning on day one, in a determined effort to weather the immediate financial crisis and chart a responsible course toward long-term self-reliance, My Government demonstrated real leadership by taking decisive action. Since then, it has taken a responsible approach to spending. It has streamlined programs to make the most of every public dollar. It has cut red tape and business taxes to get employers growing and hiring. It has given generous raises to public sector workers and tax breaks to everyone in the province. It has cut income taxes and increased benefits for seniors and families. It has led the country in measures to reduce poverty and enhancements to student aid. It has invested unprecedented amounts in infrastructure, making dramatic improvements in roads and highways, wharves and bridges, ferries and terminals, schools and hospitals, long-term care centres, public housing and municipal infrastructure. And most of these investments – in fact, an overwhelming 80 per cent – have been in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. My Government has invested in industries and enterprises offering brighter futures to thousands: agriculture and aquaculture, fisheries and forestry, mining and energy, manufacturing and innovation, tourism and culture. It has renegotiated the Atlantic Accord for a gain of two billion dollars. It has negotiated higher royalties from offshore oil and equity stakes in offshore projects worth tens of billions of dollars and unlike anything the province has achieved before. It has secured the underfunded pension plans, turned around the fiscal decline and achieved impressive and important upgrades of the province's credit rating. As a result of strong leadership and a clear vision, young and old together are celebrating the achievement of "have" status for the first time since Confederation, and we are seeing the tide turn on years of decline as our population continues to grow. All this and more My Government has done through the strong and steadfast leadership of My Premier and his team, and through the unwavering cooperation of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This record of achievement is fueling the fires of optimism and hope that are burning brightly throughout Newfoundland and Labrador today, and this is something of which all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should be proud.

No province has weathered the global recession with greater confidence and strength than ours. While retail sales across the country dropped by 3.0 per cent last year, in Newfoundland and Labrador sales rose by 2.6 per cent; and across the province last year, despite the global recession, labour income grew by 4.2 per cent. No province is better prepared to seize the opportunities ahead than Newfoundland and Labrador. How far we have come in so short a time. With My Government at the helm, our province is moving forward with incredible momentum and unshakable optimism into a new era of self-reliance full of the kinds of opportunities for which generations of our people have long strived.

Caring For Our Children

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: There is no gift more precious than a child, and no duty more important than advancing the best interests of our children through the choices we make. My Government since 2003 has been focused on creating a family-friendly environment where people can establish a lifelong foothold; where families can thrive; where children can chase their dreams, seize golden opportunities and realize their greatest potential. There is no greater legacy My Government is building for our province's children than the renewed sense of pride and confidence that they, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, are feeling as we become masters of our own destiny. In classrooms and homes across our province, a new attitude is taking hold, full of hope in the dream of a wonderful future for young people right here at home. This year's plan of action builds with confidence on the extraordinary progress Newfoundland and Labrador has achieved since 2003. My Government is committed to ensuring our children remain our number one priority.

Last year, My Government announced the creation of a new department of **Child, Youth and Family Services** and made the protection and well-being of our children and youth its top priority. The new department will be better organized to support the frontline workers who protect our most vulnerable children, and the system will be more accountable. Under the department's direct management, the monitoring and auditing of programs will be stronger and children will be better served. The new

department will revitalize our child protection system from the ground up and get back to the basics of solid case management and service delivery. The foundation for this change will be a new *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* to guide future policies and program development. The department will develop and deploy innovative solutions to address the shortage of foster homes with the long-term goal of creating a full continuum of appropriate placement options for at-risk children and youth. Already, My Government has strengthened the front line of child protection services by adding 223 positions since 2006 including 90 social worker positions and a range of other positions to support frontline work.

The new department will be proceeding with the development of a 10-year **Early Learning and Child Care Strategy.** This will be coordinated with the Department of Education as it begins consultations this year with parents and others on a draft Early Childhood Learning framework.

My Government in its first Speech from the Throne lamented that "Newfoundland and Labrador's level of child poverty is the highest in the country", and committed "to facilitate a progressive reduction in Newfoundland and Labrador's rate of poverty until we achieve the lowest rate of poverty in the country". Six years later, My Government's first Progress Report on its **Poverty Reduction Strategy** demonstrates that Newfoundland and Labrador has made significant strides in that direction. Our province has moved from having one of the highest poverty rates in the country to the third lowest. We are well along in the journey to become the province with the lowest poverty rates in the country. National antipoverty leaders have applauded My Government's leadership in fighting poverty and have described our Poverty Reduction Strategy as a model for the entire country. My Government will move forward this year to release and consult with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on its second Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan, partnering with communities and families to create opportunities to share in our province's prosperity.

Many women in our province are particularly vulnerable because of the **violence** they suffer. My Government has helped to change attitudes through its "Respect Women" campaign and will continue to work to

make violence against women as unacceptable as any other violent crime. My Government will also continue to support shelters where women and children can escape violence in their homes.

Discrimination is another wrong from which individuals young and old should be protected. The **Human Rights Code** is one of the most important Acts of our Legislature, affording protection from discrimination by governments and the private sector. This year, My Government will bring forward a strengthened Human Rights Code to reflect the recommendations and values of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Strengthening the Local Economy

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Newfoundlanders and Labradorians young and old are united in their determination to see our province grow to achieve its full potential as a place of prosperity, self-reliance and opportunity for all. When the global financial crisis hit a year ago, My Government responded swiftly and powerfully with an unprecedented program of stimulus measures in a concerted effort to keep our people working, to keep our businesses growing and to keep our economy moving forward with confidence and strength. Weeks before last year's budget was brought down, My Premier announced an unparalleled increase in infrastructure spending to $800 million in the 2009-10 fiscal year and a plan to grow infrastructure spending to more than $4 billion over the next several years. As My Government rolled out one project after another under this aggressive **Infrastructure Strategy**, public confidence surged, employers across the province rolled up their sleeves to ready tenders and, in short order, workers across the province had their shovels in the ground. By year's end, we had let tenders for $1.3 billion worth of projects. Not only has this massive stimulus program fueled economic activity throughout our province, but it has also prepared our communities to take the lead in seizing growth opportunities as the world rebounds from the downturn. This is not a time to slow down but a time to move forward. My Government will continue to fuel the fires of economic stimulus in the year ahead with its unprecedented infrastructure spending program. This approach is the right approach, not only for the short term but for our long-term future.

Through steadfast cooperation linking communities and workers, businesses and unions and the provincial government, **central Newfoundland** is weathering the closure of the century-old paper mill at Grand Falls-Windsor and its associated operations. My Government's response has been swift, comprehensive and effective. In December of 2008, My First Minister stated clearly that we cannot as a Government allow a company that no longer operates in this province to reap the benefit of our resources. We will not give away our land, timber, and water resources to a company that does not continue to honour its historic commitments on industrial development related to our timber resources. Through the passage of Bill 75 on December 16, 2008, My Government revoked land, timber, and water rights from Abitibi and returned these natural resources to their rightful owners, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Severance pay, training assistance, employment programs and economic diversification initiatives have demonstrated My Government's unwavering determination to ensure the central region moves forward – just as the Stephenville region is doing – to a new era of growth and prosperity firmly established on an array of enterprises across many sectors. The task will take time, but through the continuing partnership uniting people throughout the central region, we will emerge stronger and more resilient than ever.

In **Corner Brook**, My Government is working cooperatively with all stakeholders to ensure the pulp and paper mill has a bright and prosperous future. The city of Corner Brook and the surrounding region will always be one of our province's powerhouses of economic activity and a proud leader in each of the many sectors in which the local economy is diversified.

From our larger regions to our smaller rural communities, My Government is focused on pursuing every promising opportunity for new growth and jobs. Through the Rural Secretariat, My Government will continue to work closely with citizens and stakeholder groups to develop new approaches to **regional collaborative governance**.

Rural communities have thrived over the centuries under the leadership of strong individuals backed by tireless volunteers. Understanding the value of **municipal service**, My Minister led a successful

"MakeYourMarkNL" campaign which, last year, increased the number of candidates seeking municipal office. My Government is proud of those who have stepped up to serve on their municipal councils, and is ready to work with them and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to strengthen local government and improve local infrastructure and services, including access to clean drinking water.

On ball fields, in fire departments, in our hospitals and in many other ways, tens of thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians contribute to their communities and province each year as **volunteers**, and we applaud them. In April, My Government will present the inaugural U Rock Volunteer Award to individuals 30 and under and to youth-run and youth-serving organizations that have made a real difference in our province.

Widening Access

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: As a result of My Government's unprecedented investments, the people of Labrador this year celebrated the historic completion of Phase III of the Trans-Labrador Highway at long last linking Southern Labrador to Labrador West. It is eager to continue work to improve and maintain the quality of this artery in the years to come. My Government was also excited to announce the establishment of a winter ferry link across the Strait of Belle Isle, connecting Southern Labrador to the Island during the months of ice. My Government will continue to work with the Federal Government to ensure it does an effective job of meeting its constitutional obligation to provide appropriate, reliable **ferry services** between the Island and the Maritimes at reasonable, highway-equivalent costs to all users.

My Government has invested significantly in transportation infrastructure and services within the province, including roads, highways and provincial ferry services. No less vital to our economic strength than land- and sea-based transportation services is **air access**. My Government will take the lead in implementing a new five-year strategy to improve air services in all regions of the province.

My Government will continue to take full advantage of opportunities to streamline operations and improve services through **electronic service delivery**. The province will continue to support BizPaL, an online Business Regulatory Information Service launched in 2009. Other such electronic service delivery projects in the pipeline include an online deeds registration project, which will allow authorized users to securely enter deeds registrations online; online access to applications for birth, marriage and death certificates and electrical permits; and student loan payments.

Raising Our Level of Expertise

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: With a bold new attitude of confidence in our ability to capitalize on opportunities and take control of our future, My Government is determined to advance the province's expertise in the discipline of **capital investment management**. To this end, it has invested resources to research the investment of large pools of capital, such as pension funds. My Government is exploring options that will support the development of professional investment expertise in areas such as portfolio management. This research and evaluation will lead to the development of a framework that will guide our province in building the level of investment capacity required to manage our own wealth over the next seven years.

The **ocean technology sector** in this province is poised to become a billion-dollar industry by 2015 with more than 6,000 employees, opening doors to careers in offshore energy, life sciences, environmental technologies, aerospace and defence. My Government is taking the lead in working with local stakeholders and international partners to nurture knowledge-based capacity and capture business development opportunities that capitalize on our coastal location and expertise.

Catalyzing research and development in Newfoundland and Labrador is the primary objective of our province's new **Research and Development Corporation**, launched by My Government in May 2009 to strengthen the focus, quantity, quality and relevance of R&D undertaken for the long-term economic benefit of the province. Increased R&D activities

will play a major role in driving innovation, creating wealth and increasing economic growth in Newfoundland and Labrador for future generations. R&D is a critical component of a healthy and robust economy, and already, the RDC has launched two new programs to deliver against its mandate.

Research and development has its genesis in a strong and vibrant **education system**. It is often in the classroom that our province's children learn to explore their diverse gifts and reach their greatest potential. My Government has demonstrated year after year that children are its number one priority by its record-breaking investments in education. This year, My Government will continue to build on these investments through important initiatives such as the Excellence in Mathematics strategy for our K-12 students; the Futures in Skilled Trades and Technology Program for high school students; the ISSP/Pathways recommendations for our students who require extra support; and the new Teacher Allocation Model extending class-size maximums to the remaining two K-9 grades, namely 6 and 9.

At the **post-secondary** level, My Government is proud of the significant investments it has made to enhance the student aid program and ease the burden of debt for graduates. Newfoundland and Labrador is leading the country in student aid reform and improvements to post-secondary accessibility, and our province will be stronger in the years to come because of these investments in students. My Government this year will follow through on its commitment to increase autonomy for Memorial University Corner Brook's Sir Wilfred Grenfell Campus. In November, we were delighted to give a warm Newfoundland and Labrador welcome to Memorial's new president, Dr. Gary Kachanoski, and we would like to echo that welcome here today.

Three years ago, My Government released the report of the Skills Task Force it commissioned to prepare for labour force needs and opportunities associated with large-scale development projects on the horizon. Having acted early, it is more prepared than ever to ensure our province and people capture the opportunities these projects provide. This year, My Government will take further action to implement improvements for **apprentices**. To advance the participation of women in

nontraditional trades, My Government will continue to work with industry partners to develop and support implementation of effective women's employment and business access strategies for large-scale resource development projects. My Government will also continue to support apprenticeship initiatives to strengthen women's access to training and employment in the growing sectors of our economy.

Our province's goal of sustainable self-reliance means attracting and enabling young people to put down deep roots in our communities. My Government is demonstrating that children and youth are its number one priority by partnering with young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to make ours the province of choice for youth. It recently launched its **Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy** and designated a Minister Responsible for Youth Engagement to take the lead in putting the strategy into action. It also began to use new tools to promote labour market attachment, including our first provincial job matching site at JobsinNL.ca and a new online human resources toolkit for employers. For the first time, Newfoundland and Labrador is in a position to shape and deliver over $250 million in employment and training programs to link people to opportunities for stable careers.

My Government is striving to make Newfoundland and Labrador a province where people with disabilities will have access to the same opportunities as others. Having created a Provincial Advisory Council and a Disability Policy Office, My Government is now working across all departments and agencies in collaboration with the wider community to dissolve the barriers to inclusiveness. My Government will listen attentively to these ideas and develop a new provincial **Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities**.

To nurture healthy work environments and promote growth, My Government has also been working to strengthen partnerships among the public sector, the private sector and organized labour. The Strategic Partnership Council has brought forward recommendations for amendments to **labour legislation** to promote stable, progressive workplace relations by making the framework that governs them more modern and flexible.

Harvesting Bountiful Resources

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: The **fisheries sector** remains among the most important sectors in our province. My Government will work with stakeholders to make our fishing sector more competitive, sustainable and self-reliant by continuing to implement the initiatives of the **Fishing Industry Renewal Strategy** of 2007. This long-term strategy was developed after a high level of consultation with industry and involves a total financial commitment by My Government of up to $140 million. The strategy also identified inherent structural issues that My Government has begun to address proactively in collaboration with the Fish, Food and Allied Workers and the Association of Seafood Producers, demonstrating the power of cooperation to progress this critical industry. These are challenging times in world markets, but My Government remains committed to a strong, sustainable fishing industry, which is the backbone of so many rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The province will continue to lead the development and implementation of a provincial **Coastal and Ocean Management Strategy and Policy Framework** to address issues such as climate change, aquatic invasive species and the establishment of new Coastal Management Areas.

The province will also harness the power of **fisheries innovation** through its continuing work with the Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program and the Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation. The technology and opportunities program supports research related to the harvesting and processing sectors that will aid the provincial fishing industry as it strives to become more innovative and competitive. The Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation plays a significant role in supporting research and development in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and it will bring the expertise, creativity, and infrastructure of Memorial University, in particular its Marine Institute, to the challenges and opportunities in the fishing and aquaculture industries.

A sector that has experienced enormous growth in recent years and become one of our most exciting industries is the **aquaculture industry**. Aquaculture has changed the face of many communities and offers great

promise to others. Today, there are licensed aquaculture sites from the Northern Peninsula to Placentia Bay, from the Port au Port Peninsula to Notre Dame Bay, Bonavista Bay, Trinity Bay and along the province's south coast. While the positive impact on the economy of the Connaigre Peninsula, in particular, has been enormous, the south coast holds much more opportunity for expanded salmon aquaculture. Innovation and financial incentive programs have facilitated the rapid growth of the sector, which has experienced a five-fold increase in production value since 2003. Operations in this province are farming such species as steelhead trout, Atlantic salmon and blue mussels. My Government is determined to pursue these opportunities aggressively and responsibly through continuing investments in infrastructure and a steadfast commitment to bio-security to ensure this new industry is sustainable and that our reputation for quality is second to none.

My Government will continue to work with the Federal Government on cost-shared initiatives to support research and development in the **agricultural sector**, new farmland development and advanced research and surveillance of important animal diseases for the protection of the agricultural industry and public health.

My Government understands the challenges and opportunities in the **forest sector**. Our forestry companies must have the ability to compete in a changing global environment to ensure the continued sustainable development of our forest industry. We will continue to work with the industry to enable these companies to improve their businesses by diversifying the products that are developed from our forests and identifying new markets for these products. My Government continues to promote the use of wood pellets as a source of home heating through our Residential Wood Pellet Rebate Program, an action that is positive from both an industry and an environmental perspective. Moving forward with recommendations from the comprehensive marketing strategy for the province's forest industry, My Government will take the first step towards achieving Environmental Management System certification that will open up broader markets for our forest products in European countries. By ensuring the competitiveness of our producers we will strengthen the entire industry.

Harnessing Energy and Mineral Potential

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: The **mines and energy sectors** continue to be major drivers of the provincial economy. Combined, they represent the largest source of revenues for the province.

The **mineral sector** will continue to grow this year as operations in Labrador West return to pre-downturn levels and first concrete is poured at the Vale Inco nickel processing plant under construction at Long Harbour. The province's first new iron ore mine in almost fifty years, in western Labrador near Schefferville (Quebec), has just been released from the environmental assessment process, and a second is now being examined. The railway in Labrador West connecting the Quebec-based Bloom Lake iron ore mine near Labrador City and Wabush to the existing railway is nearing completion. Once the railway line is fully operational, 100 per cent of the line's employees will be Newfoundland and Labrador residents and the railway will be headquartered in Wabush. To advance this key sector, My Government will develop a Mineral Strategy in consultation with stakeholders and the public, reviewing all aspects of mineral policy with a view to maximizing activity and optimizing wealth.

The oil and gas sector will also continue to grow this year as both development and exploration work proceed. In February of this year, My Government along with Nalcor Energy finalized an agreement with its partners in the oil and gas industry for the development of the **Hibernia Southern Extension**. This project will contribute $13 billion in incremental revenues to the province over its life. In the agreement, the province also furthered its Energy Plan objectives by achieving an equity position, an enhanced royalty regime and commitments to gender equity and diversity.

Several important **exploration programs**, both offshore and onshore, will proceed in 2010 on the heels of successful exploration programs in 2009 culminating with the Mizzen discovery in the Flemish Pass Basin. In the Laurentian Basin, ConocoPhillips and co-venture partner BHP Billiton commenced their first drilling in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore area. In the Orphan Basin, Chevron and its other co-venture partners including ExxonMobil are ready to act on the information they

have gathered from their first well and subsequent geoscience data with plans to spud a second deep water well. In the Jeanne D'Arc Basin, north of the White Rose field, Husky Energy is busy exploring in collaboration with Suncor and Statoil. Nalcor has commenced exploratory drilling onshore near Parsons Pond. In the Deer Lake and Bay St. George Basins respectively, Deer Lake Oil and Gas and Vulcan Minerals/Investcan are making their own plans. Seismic acquisition programs are planned this year for the Labrador Shelf, the Sydney Basin and the Laurentian Basin, making this a banner year.

In the electricity sector, My Government continues to advance prospects to develop **Lower Churchill power**. The Environmental Assessment process continues to proceed for both the generation and transmission projects. Recently, the Public Utilities Board established a water management agreement between Nalcor Energy and Churchill Falls (Labrador) Corporation. This agreement sets out the water sharing arrangements between the two companies and is critical for the development of the Lower Churchill. This agreement was made possible by amendments that My Government made to the *Electrical Power Control Act* and legislation that granted Nalcor Energy water rights to the Lower Churchill River. The province has also made its case for transmission access through Quebec before that province's "Régie de l'énergie" and is awaiting a ruling. My Government also continues to explore other options for transmission and access to markets in eastern Canada and northeast United States.

Also this year, the Churchill Falls (Labrador) Corporation is proceeding with its motion in Québec Superior Court against Hydro-Québec to address inequities in the 1969 **Upper Churchill Power Contract** pricing. The current contract is grossly inequitable for CF(L)Co and its shareholders for the next 32 years. As a result of My Premier's diligence in reviewing all aspects of this decades-old inequity, My Government discovered a new, promising legal option to address on a go-forward basis the gross inequity of this contract. Having informed CF(L)Co, we are optimistic about the potential for resolution. Legal advice indicates that, in the particular context of the Power Contract between CF(L)Co and Hydro-Québec, circumstances have changed in a way that could not have been reasonably foreseen at the time the contract was initiated.

The consequence of these unforeseen circumstances, coupled with the extraordinary length of the contract, has resulted in a gross inequity in the distribution of contractual benefits between Hydro-Québec and CF(L) Co. This unique situation regarding the Power Contract, combined with the obligation under Quebec Civil Law to act in good faith throughout the full term of a contract, obliges Hydro-Québec, upon request, to reopen the contract in order to re-establish the appropriate equilibrium.

Developing Labrador

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: The Big Land of Labrador continues to benefit from the implementation of the Northern Strategic Plan and an array of related initiatives, including many already highlighted. My Government is releasing the **midterm report on the Northern Strategic Plan** to document progress on the many commitments to Labrador's people and communities. Recent milestones include the opening of Phase III of the Trans-Labrador Highway and the continued paving of Phase I; the expansion of satellite telephone services on the highway; the introduction of year-round marine service across the Strait of Belle Isle; an agreement on the boundaries of the Mealy Mountain National Park Reserve and an adjoining Eagle River Waterway Provincial Park; continued implementation of the Inuit land claims agreement; the award of a tender for the Labrador West Regional Healthcare Facility; and the new tourism marketing ad themed "Ancient Land", to name just some of the progress benefiting Labradorians.

My Government is very excited about the initialing of the **Tshash Petapen (or New Dawn) Agreement** with the Innu Nation in February of 2009. The Agreement marks a new beginning for the Innu of Labrador and their relationship with the province. Subject to ratification by the Innu people of Labrador, the agreement resolves key issues relating to matters between the province and the Innu Nation surrounding the Innu Land Claims Agreement, the Lower Churchill Impacts and Benefits Agreement and Innu redress for the Upper Churchill hydroelectric development.

My Government has been especially vigorous in promoting the strategic importance of the province as a **Northern Gateway.** As the only Atlantic province with a Northern region, Newfoundland and Labrador is positioned to play a pivotal role helping develop new economic growth and international trade opportunities; facilitating oil and natural gas development activities; implementing environmental protection initiatives; assisting with adapting to climate change; and maintaining Canadian sovereignty, as well as a host of other initiatives.

Protecting Our Environment

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have an enduring love for their natural environment. We envision a future in which self-reliance and **sustainability** go hand-in-hand. By harvesting our natural resources responsibly, we are safeguarding our province's environment for the benefit of generations to come. In particular, we are determined to ensure that our nonrenewable resources fuel a renewable future that endures long after the nonrenewable resources are gone.

Through its Climate Change Action Plan, its Energy Plan and other initiatives, My Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to responsible environmental stewardship. The **Newfoundland and Labrador Green Fund** provides financial aid for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With a goal of further advancing greenhouse gas reduction, promoting energy efficiency and adapting to the impacts of climate change, My Government will release a discussion document and undertake consultations to determine the best approach going forward.

My Government will continue to collaborate with Environment Canada during the upcoming review of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to ensure there are provisions in the new federal Act to facilitate enhanced cooperation with provinces in **environmental assessments.**

Celebrating Our Heritage

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: *Uncommon Potential*, our joint government and industry **tourism strategy** for Newfoundland and Labrador, and our substantial financial investments in marketing the province have been wildly effective in celebrating the heritage and beauty of Newfoundland and Labrador and drawing tourists to our communities. The tourism industry contributed almost $850 million to the provincial economy in 2008 and employs approximately 13,000 people. The industry is especially important in the rural communities that so many visitors are coming here to experience.

Newfoundland and Labrador took full advantage in Vancouver and Whistler of the opportunity to showcase **our cultural strengths** before an international audience at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. In April, we will celebrate our hospitality and love for music when we host the JUNOS once again before a broadcast audience on five continents potentially exceeding 250 million. Other cultural showcases include the successful CBC Television national series "Republic of Doyle", which created over one hundred full-time local jobs and generated wage totals approaching $10 million, and has just been picked up for a second season. Two local films won considerable kudos far from home this year: "Grown Up Movie Star", which screened at the Sundance and Berlin International Film Festivals; and "Crackie", which screened at, among other places, the Cannes Film Festival.

In 2010, we are drawing people to **Cupids** for the 400th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of the first English colony in what is now Canada. This year, My Government will establish a new Provincial Historic Site in Cupids, the Cupids Cove Plantation Archaeological Site. We look forward to major celebrations at Cupids and spinoff celebrations near and far as the year unfolds.

Advancing Health Care

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Over the last six years, My Government has invested significantly to improve the health care system in our province and to enhance **health care services in all regions.** Indeed, our total budget for health care has increased by $1.0 billion. Some key investments over the past six years total $17.9 million for mental health and addictions services, $112 million for health facilities repairs and maintenance, $281 million to improve health infrastructure throughout the province and $177.9 million for new health care equipment. Recognizing that health care affects each and every one of us individually, My Government will continue to ensure that our investments are effective in improving the health care system for all who use it. This means continuing to enhance health care services in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and providing services to residents close to home, as My Government has done with new dialysis units and unprecedented infrastructure projects throughout our province. Through the purchase of new medical equipment, My Government will continue to improve access to services by reducing wait times.

Cancer continues to touch every family in our province. Having commissioned and learned important lessons from the Cameron Inquiry on Hormone Receptor Testing, My Government will continue to ensure that those suffering from cancer receive modern treatment options, and continue to work to improve the quality of our laboratories and services. By the end of this month, as mandated by recommendation #60 of the Cameron Inquiry report, My Minister of Health and Community Services will provide an update to the House of Assembly and the people of the province on the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. My Government is committed to responding to all of the issues and recommendations made by Justice Cameron. My Government will plan ahead to ensure the province is prepared to deal with chronic disease while at the same time working to prevent cancer from taking hold.

There are individuals in our province who suffer from the stigma associated with a mental illness or an addiction. My Government is determined to ensure that those suffering from **mental illnesses and addictions** have effective treatment options available to them. My Government has committed to build two new treatment facilities, including a residential treatment centre for youth with addictions in Grand Falls-Windsor and a residential treatment centre for youth with complex mental health needs.

My Government knows that an investment in treatment must go hand-in-hand with an investment in prevention. To this end, My Government will continue to promote our province's **Wellness Strategy** in communities throughout our province. Through the Office for Seniors and Aging, My Government will work to ensure our aging population is a healthy population, and will plan ahead by supporting the types of programs and services our seniors will need into the future.

Well Wishes

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: While we are on the theme of wellness, I would like to express our collective best wishes to the Premier, who is recovering marvelously from heart surgery. He has an important job to do, and it is heartening to see him return in such short order, rearing to go.

Embracing a Future of Self-reliance

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: As My Premier has said, the time has come in this province to be proud of what we have achieved together. Standing tall in the face of adversity; maintaining a united front; saying "no more giveaways"; knowing what we are fighting for: these are the things that now define us as a people. A "have-not" province no more, we are embracing our newfound status in the Canadian federation: a status that has brought us newfound respect; a status that

is well-deserved; a status that will define the next generation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as we reach for new heights, strive to accomplish more than ever before, and meet the true potential that has always been here in this province. We are strong, proud and determined, with confidence and self-assurance anchored deep in the hearts and souls of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at home and away. Imagine poor little Newfoundland and Labrador standing proud and tall and strong, as a force of change and progress on the national stage, putting to shame the defeatists and finally getting the respect we have always deserved. Our future is bright with possibilities as we enter a new era of self-determination and self-reliance. This is our time to shine. Better than ever is only the beginning. For Newfoundland and Labrador, the best is yet to come!

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Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Estimates of expenditure will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence this new Session.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.